



TALQ

TRANSPARENCY IN ART LEVELS AND QUALIFICATIONS

CALL FOR PROPOSALS – EACEA/48/2015 Key Action 3: Support for Policy Reform, Support to European Policy Tools. Quality assurance at European level for enhanced transparency and recognition of skills and qualifications. PROJECT – 576008-EPP-1-2015-1-IT-EPPKA3-TRANS-SQ - TALQ - Transparency in Arts Levels and Qualifications.

Research Methodology

(Version August 2016)

Objectives

The TALQ project is answering to the general objective of the CALL FOR PROPOSALS – EACEA/48/2015 Key Action 3: Support for Policy Reform, Support to European Policy Tools (Quality assurance at European level for enhanced transparency and recognition of skills and qualifications), proposing a research activity to map national qualifications and certificates to ESCO based international profiles. The investigation activity will represent the basis to propose and test possible procedures, approaches and quality criteria shared and applicable at European level. The project's activities will be developed according to the policies related to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), thus linking international profiles to EQF.

The TALQ project answers to the Theme C of the call, aiming at developing three potential European core profiles based on ESCO occupational profiles, relating them to the EQF and describing quality assurance principles, mechanisms and possible quality criteria for awarding qualifications forthcoming from it.

The targeted profiles selected belong to ISCO 08 / 3435 / Artistic and cultural associate professionals not elsewhere classified. Ideally, the project is focused on the following ESCO profiles:

- lighting technician
- lighting operator
- lighting designer

Those three profiles represent a good test case for the different EQF levels within level 4 of ISCO.

The choice of the profiles is motivated by several challenges, reoccurring in other occupations:

- the three profiles vary between levels depending on the national labor market
- the three profiles contain overlapping competences and skills
- the three profiles are easy transferable to other STEM (Science – Technology – Engineering – Mathematics) occupations as they have the same classification structure. The assumption of the researchers is that this customization can be adapted and transferred to other sectors of the performing arts (i.e. sound area, video area, costume area, set-building area, make-up area...) as well as in parallel sectors of the civil society
- the investigated profiles exist in education, training, apprenticeship and self-learning (with a validation process of prior learning already implemented in some EU countries)
- the jobs of these profiles are done by employees as well as by independent workers
- the three profiles are internationally acknowledged

According to the last version made by the SREF (the sectoral reference group), ESCO profiles' descriptions are the following:

Technician - Lighting technicians setup, prepare, check and maintain equipment in order to provide optimal lighting quality for a live performance. They cooperate with road crew to unload, set up and operate lighting equipment and instruments.

Operator – Light board operators control the lighting of a performance based on the artistic or creative concept, in interaction with the performers. Their work is influenced by and influences the results of other operators. Therefore, the operators work closely together with the designers, operators and technical crew, program the equipment and operate the lighting system. They may be responsible for conventional or automated lighting fixtures and, in some instances, controlling video as well. Their work is based on plans, instructions and other documentation.

Designer – Lighting designers develop a lighting design concept for a performance and supervise the execution of it. Their work is based on research and artistic vision. Their design is influenced by and influences other designs and must conform with these designs and the overall artistic vision. Therefore, the designers work closely with artistic directors, operators and the artistic team. During rehearsals and performance they coach the operators to obtain optimal timing and manipulation. Lighting designers develop lighting plots, cue lists and other documentation to support the operators and production crew. Lighting designers sometimes also work as autonomous artists, creating light art outside a performance context.

Background needs assessment

The present research is based on the results of several previous projects (already mentioned in PART 1 – OPERATIONAL CAPACITY) as the partnership has been cooperating since 2007 according to sustainable policies, thus adding improvements at every stage of the cooperation and sharing results when running programs separately. This approach responds to a need, as the efforts of developing a common EU framework for performing arts technical training and labor market has always been extremely challenging.

The chosen profiles show some specific features:

- Some elements can't be measured objectively (i.e. the part connected to the arts)
- They are strongly connected to traditions and cultural differences
- There is a wide variation in profiles between countries, organizations and individual actors
- The same technical profiles are found in a large number of sectors like theatre, events, worship, community workers, hospitality, hotel, trade fairs, museums, etc.

Therefore, on the other hand, the performing arts technical sector is a good test case also for other sectors with analogous features. Moreover, training and education for the sector exists as well under the supervision of education, culture and work administrations.

The rules apparently shared by all the sectors of the industrial (production) and educational (training) systems are regularly re-debated when dealt with in the field of arts and crafts of the performing arts. The complexity of a sector is demonstrated by the un-definition of objective references as space, time and all those purely quantitative factors that regulate and facilitate the management of productive activities in general. All these aspects cause a different form of productive activity: the spectator, understood as a “consumer”, usually knows only the front part of the stage where the artistic event takes place and ignores the complex system of technical, artistic and managerial professionals operating behind the curtains.

The training system related to these professions moved through a long and articulated process. Across Europe, up to twenty, twenty-five years ago, the so-called technical and technical-artistic professionals were trained in the workplace - on the stage or in the workshops -, and this transmission of knowledge was ensured by the willingness of veteran professionals in welcoming and training new generations.

The evolution of the technical and technological level as well as the increased complexity of the settings created the need of a formalized training and acknowledged specific professions at different levels among EU countries.

Getting into lighting area specificities, we can see that there is a huge difference between the major cultural bodies and the sector’s smaller players. We could also say that the two sectors rarely meet, as they cover different fields of action (with major institutions organising occasional events in a few large cities and small productions spread across the country over longer periods) and therefore have a hard time understanding that they might be involved in the same job. EU cultural industry sector is partly represented by small to mid-sized companies, local or regional cultural centres working mostly with small budgets and whose staff is as multi-disciplinary as possible. At the same time, a clear division of roles is still maintained in bigger organisations. The lighting department of Teatro alla Scala in Milan comprises four different professional profiles: the lighting designer in charge of the artistic lighting plans (who can be an inside professional or a freelance guest), the “realizzatore (or “datore”) luci” in charge of the application of the lighting plans on stage, the lighting board operator (working exclusively on the console following the realizzatore’s instructions) and the stage electricians (including chief electricians and subordinated members of the crew).

But how is training developed at EU level? We can define some macro categories which are shared by the European Community. These categories move on two levels; the first level pertains to target users and foresees two items: initial learning (for beginners) and life-long learning (advanced learning and training for professionals). The second level pertains to the place hosting the training programme and could be summarized into 4 items: “inside” educational system (i.e. academic system, based on BA, MA and PHD), “outside” educational system (i.e. private training centres, but also under the ministry of culture or labor in some countries), in house (i.e. training on stage, apprenticeship), products training (i.e. training directly related to a specific commercial product, such as a lighting board). These two levels always cross each other expressing a specific relationship, except for the case of “products training” which hardly exist for beginners during initial learning.

	Inside educational	Outside educational	In house	Products training
Initial learning	X	X	X	none
LLL	X	X	X	X

Thanks to the cooperation of Social partners it should be possible to draw a more detailed overview of training and educational situation of technicians operating in the field of performing arts among different EU countries.

Starting from this very general description of local contexts we should be able to see if the results of European projects fit with the concrete needs. The challenge consists in getting this variety of systems in the common framework of ESCO and EQF without affecting the differences in policy and view of the countries and, furthermore, in verifying if there is enough support and trust from the countries and the local players to do so.

Cores of the project

TALQ project aims at providing an exhaustive inventory/mapping in at least 10 eligible countries, starting from a quick scan which will be addressed to the whole EU countries.

TALQ will search and analyze contents and structures of existing training and formal education systems, matching them with information on labor market and qualifications and mapping them against the ESCO competences of the chosen profiles.

It will be focused on three European core profiles (based on ESCO occupational profiles) representing different levels of the macro-area of lighting technical professions of the performing arts, expressing qualifications in terms of knowledge, skills and competences. The process of defining the EQF level will be based on an expert group chosen by the stakeholders and will include a quantitative as well as a qualitative approach to reach consensus.

TALQ will exploit the investigation in order to develop a common set of quality assurance principles and quality criteria for the assessment, validation and award of qualifications procedure. The approach will be focused on the possible customization of the case, in order to apply it to other similar profiles within the sector and outside the sector.

Thanks to the involvement of the Social partners, the professional organizations and the existing network of vocational training providers, TALQ will provide a final report on a common position among all the interested organizations (with a minimum representation of 10 eligible countries of which a minimum of 8 Member States) on the developed core profiles and quality principles, mechanisms and criteria.

All the TALQ activities will be shared and visible on a web-platform which will act as a work-station providing updated information at every step. The web-platform will be further supported by a Social media community and by the production of 3 periodical newsletters, spread in correspondence of the main stands of the project. The sharing of all the steps with all the expected target users will be warranted by the 4 networks identified by the Applicant:

- Pearle* network - Employers' associations
- UNI MEI (UNI Europa) network - Employees organizations (labor unions)
- Background (previous) projects participants' informal network - Education and Vocational Training institutes
- OISTAT network – Professional associations.

Methodological approach

The methodological approach for testing key criteria and procedures will follow the following steps, leading to Interim stands:

- Identifying training programs (including alternatives like recognition of prior learning) and gathering information (core data) through desk study and selected interviews. This action will be carried out through two different steps: a quick scan of all the EU countries and an in-depth research focused on at least 10 cases relevant at national level. In those countries for which an ESCO translation is already available, training providers will be able to match themselves with the expected profiles, thus facilitating the work; in other cases, a specific support will be provided by the researchers. The phase will be carried out remotely mainly, providing a digital questionnaire to the contacted institutions and guaranteeing online support to the compilation. The preparation of the questionnaire as well as the online support will be directly managed by the researchers. A first analysis of the collected data will be possible digitally and then developed in the researchers' further reporting.
- Identifying professional profiles where they are available, also taking into consideration the work already developed by the Skills Council, in order to check also which is the reality of the sector in each country. The phase will be carried out remotely, collecting information thanks to the support of Social partners involved in the project.
- Analyzing the content by “comparing them with / translating them in” the ESCO competences. This action will led to a matrix where researchers will join the competences of the three profiles getting a comparison with identical descriptions. In order to deal with general educational competences (soft-skills) that are not in the ESCO profiles, researchers will investigate among other ESCO profiles or eventually proposing competences starting from the input from the schools/training providers.

- Comparing the 3 profiles with the EQF descriptors and defining the level. This action will be developed through three different steps. In a first stage, a selected group of people representing the stakeholders groups will be asked through a questionnaire to mark profiles against EQF levels and to provide a score. If the individual scores show a large fork (difference between minimum and maximum score) we discuss this specific item with the experts. In this discussion the writers of the profile are available for clarification of the exact meaning of the wording of the profile (but they are not allowed score). In the following step, researchers will make an overview on questionnaire results, and set a remote discussion with stakeholders' representatives. Finally, a common agreement on the level will be reached and formalized.

INTERIM STAND I - Based on the previous steps, researchers aim at reaching a common denominator on the three levels/professions. Researchers will firstly deliver a fixed profile and, as an alternative, a variable profile which will be described through a 70% fixed-competences (which define the level) and a 30% variable-competences, to ensure the safeguard of cultural identity and of local traditions and peculiarities. This will be proposed as a variation, giving the competences a credit value and a level, as the combination will stand for the real average learning effort. EQF descriptors will be properly compared. The interim stand will be supported by a transnational meeting involving the partnership and some key-actors which will be identified according to a specific risk assessment based on the critical aspects of the work carried out until this stand. Interim results will be shared also with the Agency in the frame of the meetings expected by the Guidelines of the call.

Starting from the Interim stand, researchers will get in depth with the following actions, based on the previously collected information:

- Checking and analyzing assessment methods, classifying them against a list of standard assessment procedures (the list will be developed based on existing methods).
- Checking and analyzing quality measures taken in the different institutes and, where applicable, on a national level. Quality measures will be taken into account under a double perspective:

PROCESS EVALUATION: belonging to the training process and including aspects related to workplace learning.

FINAL EVALUTATION: the core-objective of the research.

- Classifying assessment/quality measures against a set of quality measures developed based on the principles set out in ISO/IEC 17024 as well as against the quality measures used in the different countries in order to develop a framework adapted to the targeted qualification structures.
- Delivering of an ideal framework that takes no account of the practical and financial restrictions and of a realistic framework that fits the actual situation. The resulting quality framework will represent the "ideal" quality standard for certifying bodies in EU.



INTERIM STAND II - Proposing both the ideal and the realistic quality frameworks. The interim stand will be supported by a transnational meeting involving the partnership and some key-actors which will be identified according to a specific risk assessment based on the critic aspect of the work carried out until this stand. Interim results will be shared also with the Agency in the frame of the meetings expected by the Guidelines of the call.

- The last section of the project will be carried out through tables of discussion together with the stakeholders' representatives in order to get to a final report on the common position. This will be reached in the frame of a final meeting (following the previously set at each Interim stand) where stakeholders will be asked to provide feedbacks. Stakeholders will include employers, labor unions, education institutes, professional organizations and, where needed, governmental agencies. The meeting will be open to all the institutions participating in the research (especially training providers) which will be officially invited in Brussels. The meeting will be live streamed thanks to the involvement of an external technical provider and it will be possible to text and comment during the session.

FINAL STAND – Formalization of the report. Final meeting with the stakeholders and with the Agency to share the outputs and outcomes of the project.